

Prudy's Problem

and How She Solved It

by Carey Armstrong-Ellis

Genre

A **fantasy** includes make-believe events. Look for situations that could not happen.

What happens when Prudy's problem gets out of control?

Prudy seemed like a normal little girl. She had a sister. She had a dog. She had two white mice. She had a mom and a dad and her own room at home.

Yes, Prudy seemed normal.

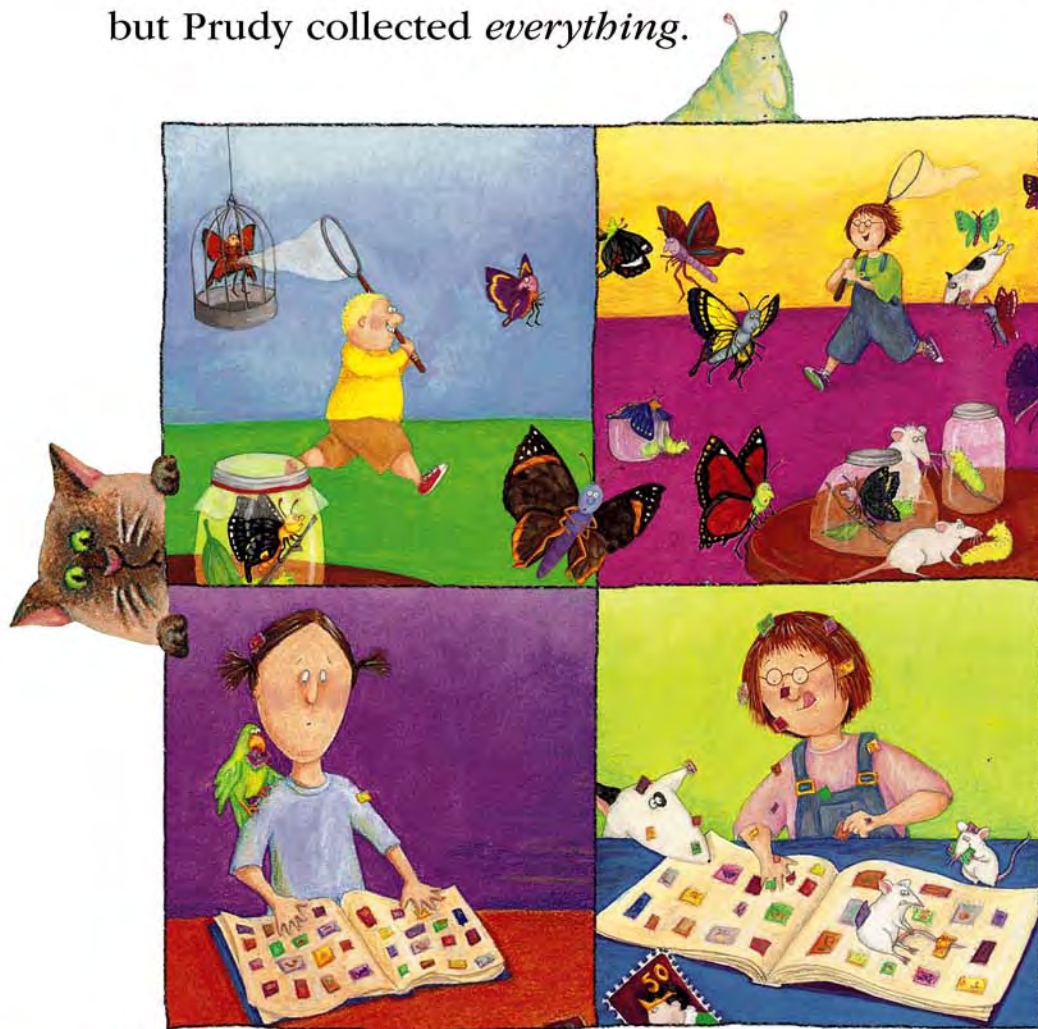
But Prudy collected things.

Now most kids collect something. Prudy's friend Egbert collected butterflies. So did Prudy.

Belinda had a stamp collection. So did Prudy.

Harold collected tin foil and made it into a big ball.
So did Prudy.

All her friends had collections. And so did Prudy—but Prudy collected *everything*. 🦋



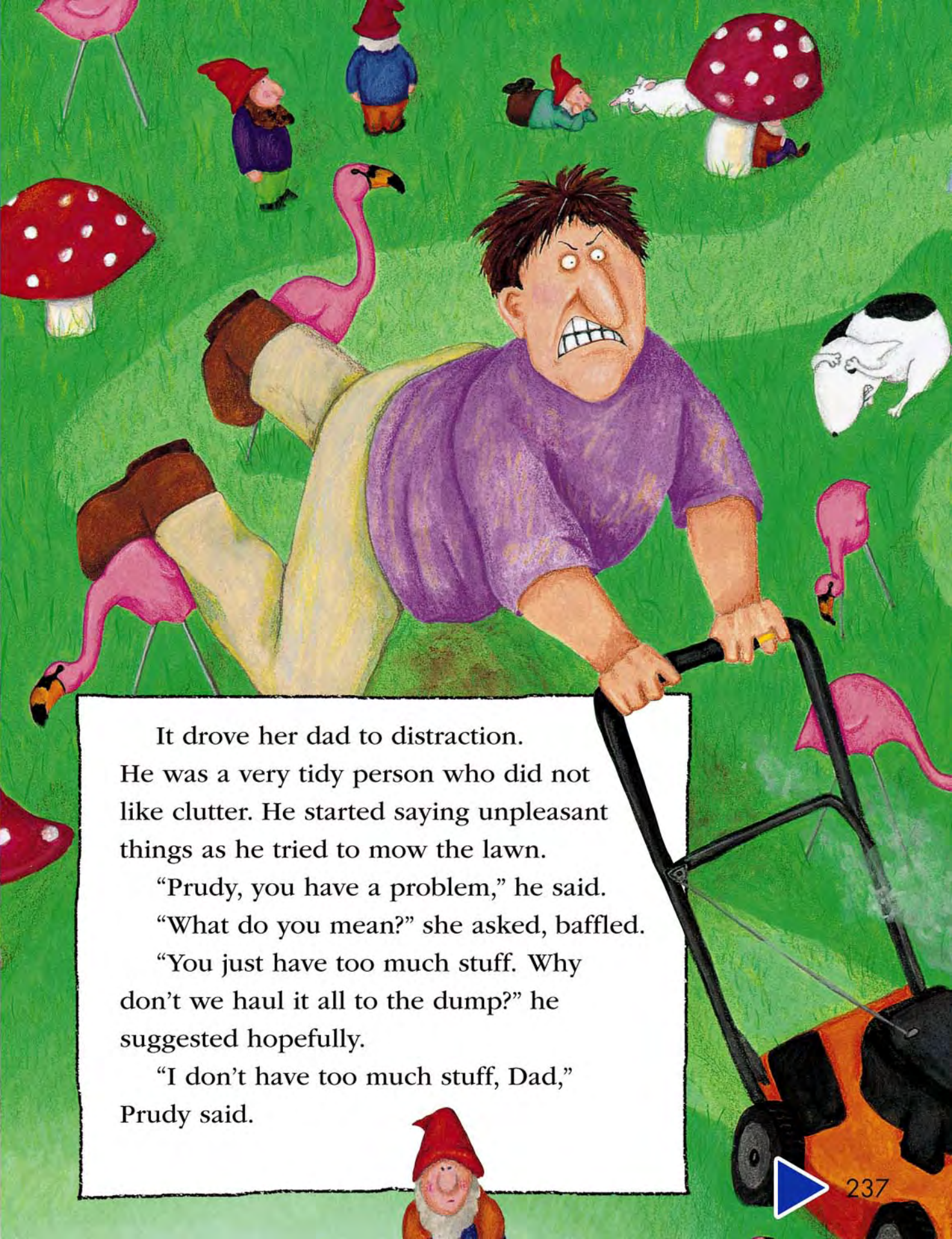
She saved rocks, feathers, leaves, twigs, dead bugs, and old flowers. She kept a box full of interesting fungi in the bottom drawer of her dresser. She saved every picture she had ever drawn and every valentine she had ever gotten. She saved pretty paper napkins from parties and kept them in her desk drawer. She had six hundred and fourteen stuffed animals in different unnatural colors.



A woman's legs, wearing purple sneakers and white socks, stick out of a giant, dark blue boot that is lying on its side on a purple floor. The floor is covered in various items of clutter, including a green ribbon, a white rat, a green lizard, a red shoe, a yellow square, a green cucumber, a red tomato, a pair of sunglasses, and two small figures in white dresses. In the background, there is a wooden desk with a stack of papers and a small yellow creature. The scene is set against a blue background.

She had collections of ribbons, shoelaces, souvenir postcards, flowered fabric scraps, pencils with fancy ends, pink scarves with orange polka dots, old calendars, salt and pepper shakers with faces, dried-out erasers, plastic lizards, pointy sunglasses, china animals, heart-shaped candy boxes with the paper candy cups still inside, tufts of hair from different breeds of dogs. . . .

She just could not throw anything away.

A man with a large nose and a purple shirt is pushing a lawnmower on a green lawn. He has a frustrated expression on his face. The lawn is covered with various items, including a pink flamingo, a white dog, a red mushroom, a green cucumber, a red tomato, a pair of sunglasses, and two small figures in white dresses. In the background, there are more mushrooms and a small yellow creature. The scene is set against a green background.

It drove her dad to distraction. He was a very tidy person who did not like clutter. He started saying unpleasant things as he tried to mow the lawn.

"Prudy, you have a problem," he said.

"What do you mean?" she asked, baffled.

"You just have too much stuff. Why don't we haul it all to the dump?" he suggested hopefully.

"I don't have too much stuff, Dad," Prudy said.

It even got to be too much for her mom, who did not mind clutter but could no longer navigate the living room.

"Maybe you could take all this to the thrift shop," she said. "Surely someone could use this old mushroom. . . ."

"I *like* that mushroom," Prudy said.

"Prudy, you have to face your problem," said her mother.

"I do not have a problem," said Prudy.



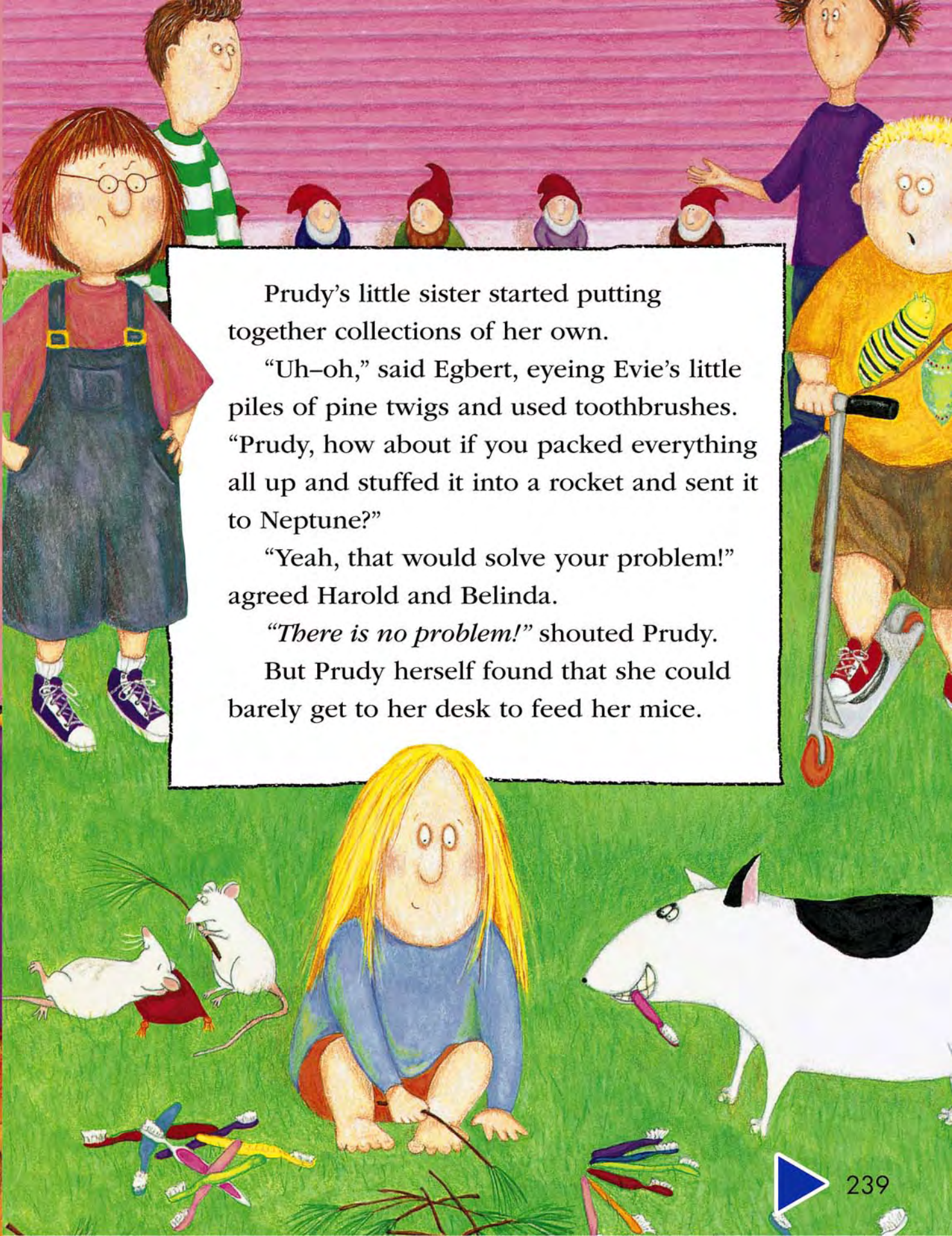
Prudy's little sister started putting together collections of her own.

"Uh-oh," said Egbert, eyeing Evie's little piles of pine twigs and used toothbrushes. "Prudy, how about if you packed everything all up and stuffed it into a rocket and sent it to Neptune?"

"Yeah, that would solve your problem!" agreed Harold and Belinda.

"*There is no problem!*" shouted Prudy.

But Prudy herself found that she could barely get to her desk to feed her mice.



She could not even get out of her room without setting off an avalanche of one thing or another.

And then one day while Prudy was walking home from school, something shiny caught her eye. It was a silver gum wrapper.

"I must take this home for my shiny things collection!" she thought.

She ran home and tried to squeeze it into her room. Something started to happen. The walls started to bulge.

The door started to strain at the hinges.

The pressure was building higher . . . and higher. . . .



The room exploded with an enormous

BANG!



Bits and pieces of stuff flew everywhere.



"Holy smokes," said Prudy. "I guess maybe I do have a little problem."

For six weeks, everyone pitched in to gather Prudy's scattered collections.

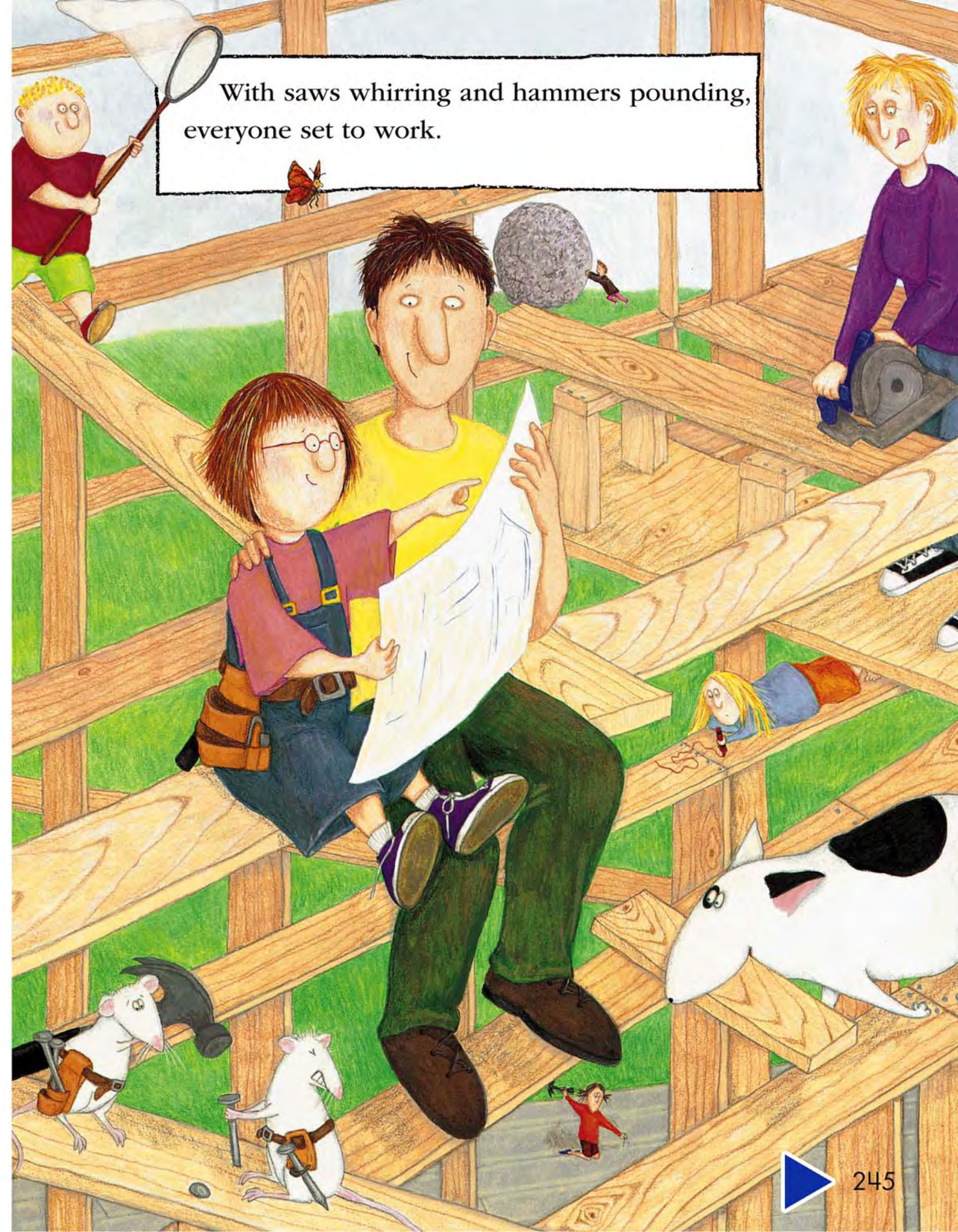
"Now what, Prudy?" said her family.

"Now what, Prudy?" said her friends.

"I'm working on it!" said Prudy.

Prudy looked around for inspiration. She visited an art collection. She visited a fish collection. She visited a rock collection. She went to the library to find ideas.

At last, after many hours of scrutinizing stacks of books, she came up with a brilliant plan!





The Prudy Museum of Indescribable Wonderment was an amazing sight to behold.

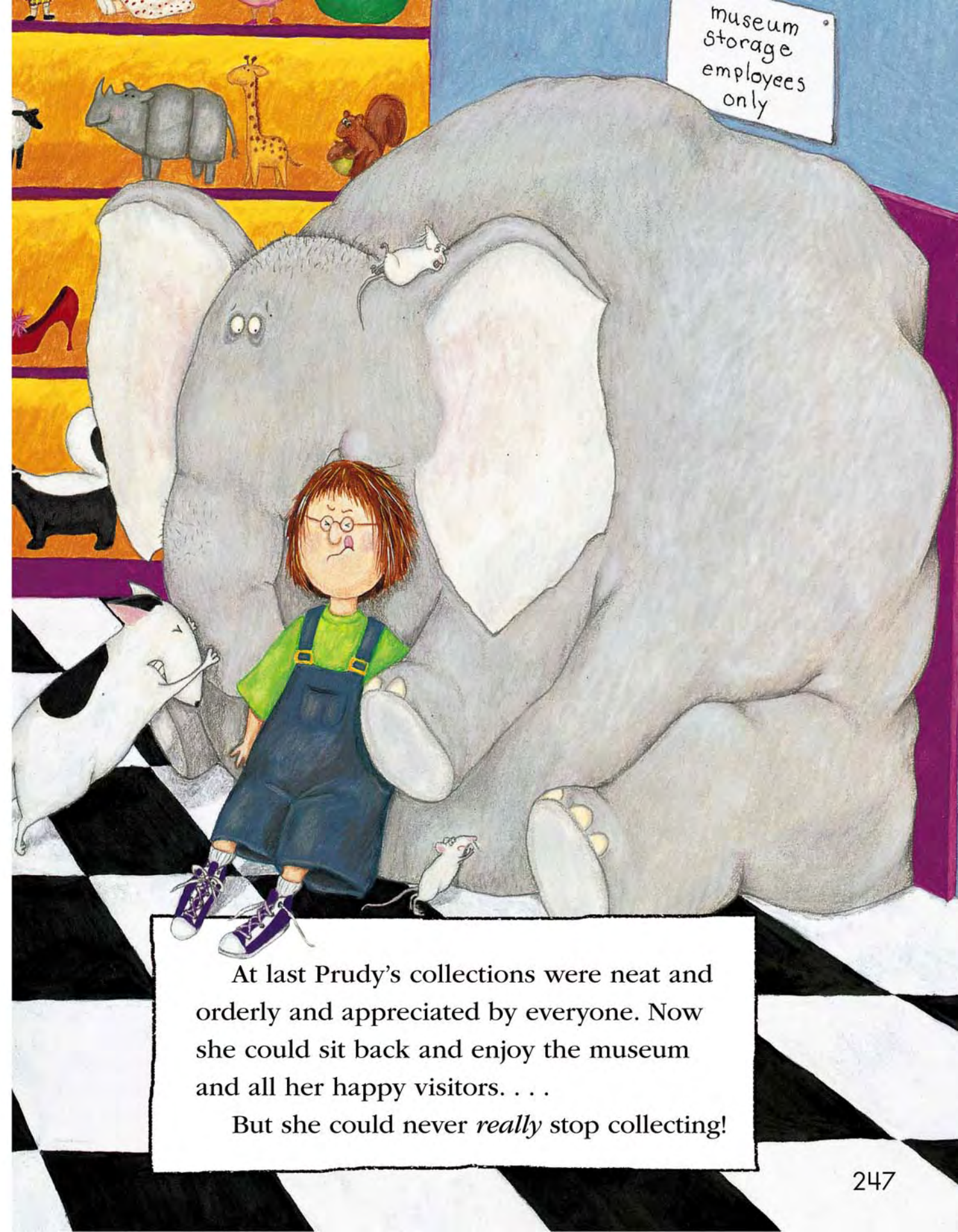
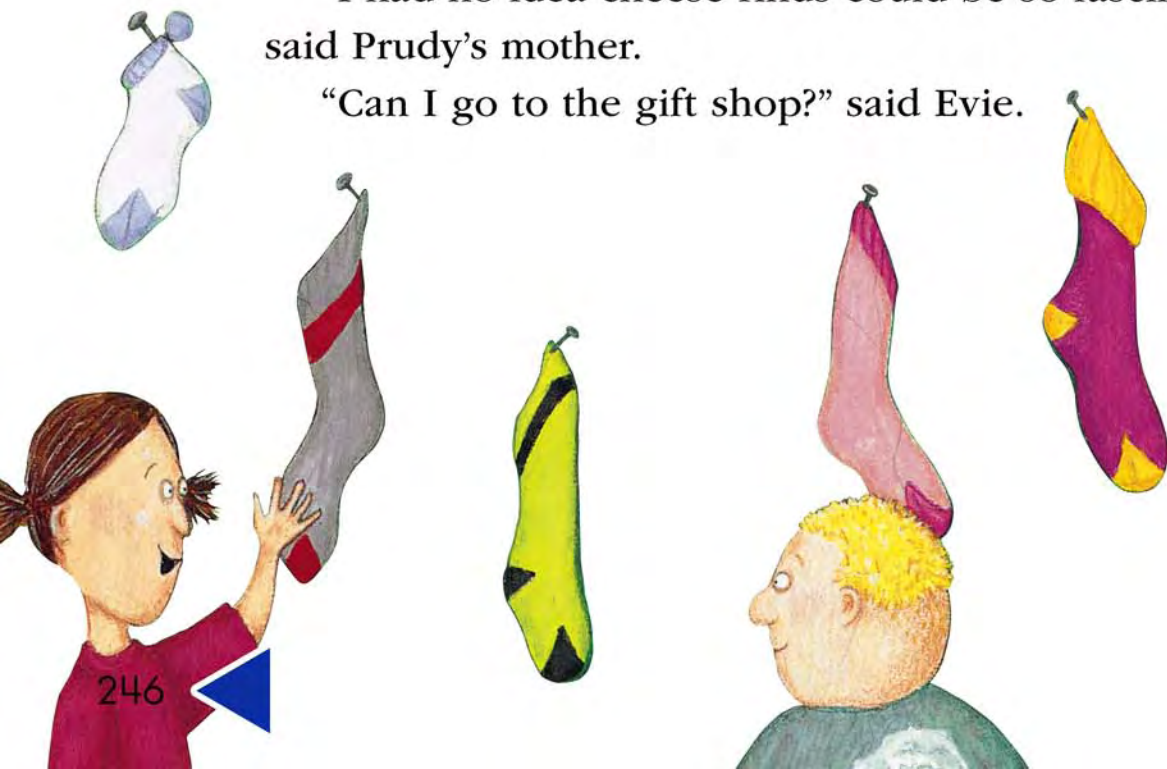
Everyone wanted to go visit!

Within a year, it was the biggest tourist attraction in Prudy's town.

"Look at that, Egbert," said Belinda. "Did you ever realize how many kinds of gym socks there are?"

"I had no idea cheese rinds could be so fascinating!" said Prudy's mother.

"Can I go to the gift shop?" said Evie.



At last Prudy's collections were neat and orderly and appreciated by everyone. Now she could sit back and enjoy the museum and all her happy visitors. . . .

But she could never *really* stop collecting!